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SUBJECT: UAE RETALIATES AGAINST DANISH CARTOONS

¶1. (U) The UAEG has condemned Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten's September 30 publication of twelve offensive cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammad. UAE Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Awqaf, Mohammad Nakhira Al Daheri alleged in the UAE press that the publication of the cartoons could cause a "dreadful clash of civilizations." The Minister also said, "as much as we condemn extremism in every part of the world, we condemn the abuse that was published, which represents a cultural extremism." Al Daheri warned of "unexpected consequences" stemming from the publication.

¶2. (U) On January 29, Abdul Hamid Al Kumity, a UAE lawyer, filed suit against the Danish newspaper for publishing slanderous materials against Islam and the Prophet Mohammad. On the same day, 50 women protested in Dubai calling for an end to all relations with Denmark. A Gulf News online poll revealed that 73% of the people polled support a boycott of Danish goods. Currently, some supermarkets in the UAE are pulling Danish products from their shelves.

¶3. (SBU) The Danish Consul Thomas Bay in Dubai verified to Econoff that although several grocery stores have removed Danish products from their shelves, no other Danish companies have been boycotted in the UAE. However, he said the boycotts in Saudi Arabia are harsher and that some Danish companies are having problems there. Bay explained that the Danish newspaper asked 40 artists to submit depictions of the Prophet Mohammad. However, only 12 artists responded. According to the Consul, the newspaper was warned by Islamic affairs experts that the depictions of the Prophet may be considered inflammatory. However, the newspaper went ahead and published the cartoons. Bay also said the Danish Government was not behind the publication and should not be held responsible. The newspaper has the right to publish the cartoons under Denmark's freedom of speech laws, he said. Bay personally believes "the newspaper should have never published the cartoons and thinks the Danish government will be set back years by this incident. The uproar is payback for Denmark's support of the USG and for its role in Iraq." Since Bay is the only Danish Government official in the UAE, the Danish MFA is sending one or two officers to help the Consul with the escalating publicity.  
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